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CHAPTER EIGHT

Education*Charles A. Goldman, Rachel Christina, and Cheryl Benard***Summary**

Building an excellent education system will be key to Palestine's prosperity and stability in the coming years. The new state will have a strong base of human capital, and maximizing investments in that capital should be a national priority. Maintaining the relevance and resonance of the education system to its sociocultural context should be equally important. Indeed, addressing these two foci in tandem will be essential to positioning Palestine as a powerful player in the region's knowledge economy.

In this chapter, we offer a framework for understanding what an excellent education system looks like and what it must achieve. We trace the development of Palestinian education and assess the extent to which its current status does or does not align with that model. Next, we briefly examine a set of core planning documents related to the development of the education system after autonomy, comparing their content and focus with our theoretical framework. We then offer our recommendations for areas in which the Palestinian education system can maintain and develop its strengths, focus greater attention, or reconsider its directions. Finally, we offer some cost estimates for the development of a successful, high-quality Palestinian education system, within the demographic and economic constraints identified in Chapters Four and Five.

The success of every education system depends on achievement in three key areas: access, quality, and delivery. In these respects, the future Palestinian state will begin with a number of strengths. Access strengths include a commitment to equitable access and success in achieving gender parity, strong community support for education, and leadership that supports both system expansion and system reform. Quality strengths include awareness of the importance of early childhood experiences to later academic achievement, willingness to engage in curricular reform, strong interest in and resources for improving pedagogy, commitment to improving the qualifications and compensation of staff, and the perception of schools as a key location for the development of students' civic skills and engagement. Delivery will be supported by relatively strong management ability and established transparency, as well as solid data collection systems and cooperation with other entities.

Nevertheless, the system also faces significant challenges. In the area of access, these include the lack of a generally enabling environment, inadequate basic facilities and supplies, unsafe schools and routes to schools, lack of special education options for students with special needs, lack of nonformal options¹ for school-age students who are not enrolled in school, and a lack of lifelong learning opportunities. Quality challenges include a lack of clear goals and expectations for the system; minimal accountability; a need to fully integrate the system's stated principles of democracy, tolerance, and equity into curricula and instruction; limited relevance of secondary, vocational, and tertiary (higher education) programs to Palestine's economic needs; limited research and development capacity and activity; low staff compensation and an emerging administrative "bulge"; and difficulty monitoring process and outcomes. Delivery is hobbled by a severely underfunded and donor-dependent system and because data on the system are not effectively linked to reform.

Our recommendations for the system over the next ten years focus on the following:

- Maintaining current high levels of access, while also working within resource constraints to expand enrollments in secondary education (particularly in vocational and technical education and the academic sciences) and early childhood programs.
- Building quality through a focus on integrated curricular standards, assessments, and professional development, supported by long-term planning for system sustainability and improved accountability.
- Improving delivery by working with donors to develop streamlined and integrated funding mechanisms that allow the administration to focus on the business of meeting student needs, informed by strong evaluation and backed by significant sustained investment.

We estimate that the Palestinian education system will require \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion per year in financing² (including both donor and national investments) over the first decade of statehood if it is to operate at a level of excellence that will support national ambitions for development. We do, however, offer some compromises to reduce that cost should it be necessary to do so.

¹ Nonformal education is a structured program of education or training that supplements, complements, or compensates for the programming offered in the standard sequence of formal (government or private) education in a particular country, when students are unable to access or benefit from those formal programs.

² All cost estimates are presented in constant 2003 U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

Quality education is essential for human development. At its best, education allows individuals to acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes that translate into improved material circumstances, and it provides them with political, social, and economic resources that support their overall well-being. It builds critical understandings of government, economy, and culture and provides opportunities for individuals to better both themselves and their communities through participation in and reform of existing systems. It offers insights into and connections across societies that enrich individual experience and contribute to common understanding.

These effects cross generations, as educated citizens raise healthier, more-educated families in improved economic and social conditions. They cross cultures, as educated individuals and groups interact with one another in increasingly global forums. They cross traditional barriers of ethnicity, gender, and class, as institutions subject to scrutiny by informed stakeholders become increasingly accountable and responsible.

For societies emerging from conflict, these visions for the role of education are particularly powerful. The rehabilitation of the school system in these contexts serves as both a symbolic marker of the return to normalcy and a platform of hope for the future. This is likely to be particularly true in Palestine, where education is an integral part of national identity and a source of community pride, and where the education system generally enjoys the confidence of the population. Palestinian schools and universities will clearly have important roles to play in the transition to and establishment of statehood—not simply by delivering services, but also by providing continuity and stability balanced with relevant reform.

This chapter examines the potential of the Palestinian education system for fulfilling those roles and offers recommendations for maximizing its success. First, we propose a framework for understanding what a successful education system entails and what it must achieve. Then, we trace the development of Palestinian education and assess the extent to which its current status does or does not align with that model. Next, we briefly examine a set of core planning documents related to the development of the education system after autonomy, comparing their content and focus with our theoretical framework. We then offer our recommendations for areas in which the Palestinian education system can maintain and develop its strengths, focus greater attention, or reconsider its directions. Finally, we offer some cost estimates for the development of a successful, high-quality Palestinian education system, within the demographic and economic constraints identified in Chapters Four and Five.

Throughout the chapter, we use current Palestinian terms to refer to the configuration of the system: “basic education” for grades 1–10, “secondary education” for grades 11–12, and “tertiary education” (also called “higher education”) for education following the completion of grade 12 (including vocational and technical programs

provided by community colleges, four-year degrees offered by colleges and universities, and graduate study).

We note at the outset that asking the Palestinian education system to meet or rise to standards of excellence within the short time frame of this exercise presents a daunting challenge. The system has many strengths and has demonstrated notable durability and vigor even under the constraints of successive external administrations and violent upheavals. However, the intifada context within which Palestinian educators and students are currently operating provides a very poor resource and infrastructure base for future development. Equally if not more important, the psychological and social climate of fear and uncertainty has provided little support for learning over the past four years, and the system will face the long-term challenges of responding to the needs of the significant numbers of staff and students who have experienced trauma.

This analysis, therefore, proposes what is essentially a best-case scenario for the development of the Palestinian education system. Our recommendations provide starting points that are not, considering all evidence, unreasonable. However, we emphasize that the system will need significant and sustained support from the Palestinian community and from international actors to achieve them as outlined here.

What Is a Successful Education System in the 21st Century?

Planning for a successful Palestinian education system requires both a general understanding of what “works” in education and specific attention to the supports and constraints within which a uniquely Palestinian system will operate. Efforts to rehabilitate the system and move it forward can then be made with these frameworks in mind. Here, we outline basic characteristics of quality education, drawing initially on UNESCO and World Bank models produced through processes of international analysis and consultation. These models examine education at a system level, with the understanding that specific applications of their principles will vary from one system to another. They also set high expectations for system components, many of which will not necessarily be achievable in the first ten years of Palestine’s independent statehood. Articulating an ideal framework, however, provides a standard against which achievements can be judged and a starting point for system transformation.

In addition to these broad international indicators of system success, our framework also incorporates concerns specific to the Arab world (which is and will remain the dominant cultural and economic frame for Palestine), as articulated in the United Nations Development Program’s Arab human development reports (UNDP, 2002 and 2003) and the Arab states’ regional framework for action (UNESCO, 2000 and 2004a; UNESCO/ARABEFA, 2001) under the Education For All initiative. Across the region, education is viewed as one of the key instruments of reform, development, and renaissance. However, while there is broad agreement that change is necessary, the

reshaping of the nature and content of Arab education systems to achieve those goals is the subject of great debate. It is significant that the 2003 *Arab Human Development Report* is subtitled *Building a Knowledge Society* and that a core issue with which it wrestles is the status and future of the region's education systems. That document's struggle to articulate a framework for authentic, relevant, internally driven, and sustained reform represents the context within and against which Palestinian efforts will take place, and we bear it in mind throughout this chapter.

Across the multiple perspectives on which we draw, there is general agreement that the success of an education system rests on *access*, *quality*, and *delivery*. We use the rendering of these terms in the World Bank's 1999 *Education Sector Analysis* as a starting point for our examination of successful education systems (World Bank, 1999a).³ We then elaborate on the original model as described below, paying particular attention to the potential of these three factors to support learning in domains that Delors and colleagues at UNESCO have referred to as *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to live together*, and *learning to be* (Delors et al., 1996). System outcomes, of course, will vary, based on the nature of access, quality, and delivery in particular contexts.⁴

Access

Access refers to the extent to which a system provides members of a society with opportunities to learn, in terms of both the structure of schooling and the environments that support high-quality learning experiences. Principles underpinning access include the following:

- Adequate shelter, good nutrition, and good health enable learning. Students' home environments should support educational achievement.
- Learning does not begin with school entry. Appropriate development opportunities for younger children should be made available and considered an important component of the education system.
- Parents or guardians and communities should encourage participation in schooling and support learning.
- On both the local and national levels, the attitude toward education should be positive. Leadership at all levels should be interested in, supportive of, and willing to devote resources to education.
- The educational system should be accessible to all, without regard to gender, religion, ethnic identity, rural or urban location, settled or transient status, level of income, or level of ability.

³ Annex One of this World Bank document (p. 47) provides the initial model from which we worked.

⁴ Indeed, the success of an education system is largely dependent upon the extent to which it is part of an accountable, relevant, and sustainable overall national development plan. This chapter does not propose education reform as a panacea for development ills, but rather as one important component of multi-sectoral efforts to address them.

- Schools should be within reasonable physical proximity of students' residences.
- Schools should have adequate supplies and materials, and facilities should be appropriate for educational purposes.
- The school environment itself, and the routes children take to and from school, should be safe and free of the threat of violence.
- Appropriate, high-quality nonformal education services should be provided for school-age children who are not formally enrolled in school.
- Lifelong learning opportunities should be provided to support and enhance the formal school system.

Quality

Quality spans inputs, processes, and outcomes of education, with particular attention to curriculum, staffing, and teaching and learning at the classroom level. Quality principles include the following:

- Clear goals and expectations for the educational system should be established and supported by leadership.
- The curriculum should be relevant to the needs of the individual, the state, and the region. Education should provide the competencies necessary to succeed and thrive in a global economy.
- Schools should promote skills and attitudes that support the development of students into engaged citizens who contribute to the well-being of their own countries and of the world. Religious, ethnic, and political tolerance; protection of minorities and the vulnerable; and the free exchange of ideas and opinions are important core values for education that support national development and global integration.
- The education system should be flexible and responsive to the needs of both state and local communities, and should include capacity for research and development.
- Staff should be highly motivated, with solid initial training, continuing professional education, and good pay and career development opportunities.
- The teaching and learning process should be well-matched to the system's requirements.
- Evaluation of the education system should address both processes and outcomes, with strong ongoing monitoring for quality assurance and improvement.

Delivery

Delivery addresses the institutional mechanisms in place for assuring high-quality education that is accessible to all. Important delivery considerations include governance, resources, and information management, as discussed below.

- Governance of the educational system should be characterized by clear responsibilities and accountability, flexible analysis and planning capacity, and appropriate decentralization of decisionmaking.
- Schools should be able to count on dependable financial resources, including an appropriate level and allocation of public funds. School administrators, as well as local and state governing bodies, should press continually for efficient and effective use of resources.
- Reporting and information systems should be sufficient to provide administrators and leaders with the necessary information to encourage effectiveness and efficiency, but should not be allowed to become excessive or onerous. Systems should provide regular monitoring and feedback, to improve performance and policymaking.

Issues Crossing Multiple Domains

Within this general framework, a number of issues cross the access, quality, and delivery domains. These issues include educational relevance, the competencies needed to function successfully in the global economy, and gender equity, and all are core concerns in Palestinian development. We address these concerns briefly here at a conceptual level and will revisit them when we recommend next steps for the system.

Relevance

In contexts of political and social transition, education's potential to both preserve and revitalize culture makes it a key focus of debate. For Palestine, these issues are particularly acute, as educators strive for autonomy in an environment where it has hitherto been unknown.

Much has been written about the tension between integrating with increasingly global economic, political, and cultural systems and maintaining cultural uniqueness. In societies like Palestine, where policymakers must juggle both significant internal diversity and strong external influences, defining relevance is particularly complicated. The Ministry of Education (MoE) cites as a key goal and challenge: "maintain[ing] a balance between the promotion of national values and openness to world cultures so as to be able to effectively contribute to the evolution of world civilization" (Palestinian MoE, 2000). Resistance on principle to any external input is both impractical (given the system's inability to finance itself) and unreasonable. However, redirecting such input through local negotiation and prioritization can produce a healthy "vernacularized" (Appadurai, 1996) system that addresses both internal and external concerns.⁵

The Arab development report of 2003 argues that "the potential for developing the knowledge capabilities of Arab countries is enormous—not only because of their

⁵ See also Hall (1991); Henry et al. (1999); Lingard (2000); and Luke and Luke (2000).

untapped human capital, but also because of their rich cultural, linguistic and intellectual heritage" (UNDP, 2003, p. ii). Tapping that potential will be a key task of Palestinian education, requiring a delicate balance between inward reflection and outward engagement so that Palestinians are "immersed in the global knowledge stream" but not "swamped or drowned" (UNDP, 2003, pp. i–ii).

Global Competencies

Closely linked to the debate over relevance are questions about what kinds of technical competencies are necessary for individuals and societies to compete and collaborate at a global level. For the Arab world in general, and for Palestine in particular, three specific concerns seem to be emerging:

- Vocational/technical education's lack of appeal, relevance, and quality.
- Tertiary education's bias toward humanities and social sciences and lack of capacity for research and development.
- Limited and uneven use of information technology to support instruction and learning.

As Gill and Fluitman (2002) note, vocational education provides an important complement to academic secondary and postsecondary training, and, when well-designed and integrated with the labor market, it is a vital contribution to economic development. Unfortunately, it is often a neglected stepchild of the education system: underfunded, anachronistic, and unappealing to large numbers of students. Creating flexible, responsive, and state-of-the-art vocational training structures and curricula that link to career opportunities and evolve as the labor market changes is a challenge for systems with already limited financial resources, but it is also an imperative (UNDP, 2002). Partnerships with private-sector businesses can alleviate some of the fiscal pressures on the system, as well as guide it toward more relevance and adaptability, but care should be taken that such arrangements do not serve corporate interests above those of the student population as a whole.

Tertiary education in much of the Arab world is notably weak in the sciences (UNESCO, 2000; UNDP, 2003). This weakness is often a function of cost: facilities and equipment for science instruction and research are expensive. However, student preferences for humanities, social science, and education are also shaped by early education experiences: tracking (channeling of students into strictly separated arts or sciences streams) in secondary school and high-stakes matriculation examinations reduce the population eligible for more intensive college- and university-level sciences, and low-quality science and mathematics instruction in the early years further reduces the pool that will have the option to pursue these fields in tertiary study (Birzeit University, 2002; Hashweh, 2003). Finally, the preference for teaching the sciences in English at the tertiary level prevents broader enrollments, because many students are not prepared

to function in a second language at that level. It also raises issues about both the quality of foreign language instruction at lower levels—which is often low, particularly in lower-income schools—and the desirability and long-term sociocultural outcomes of constraining higher-level knowledge content and usage in this fashion.⁶

Access to and facility with information technology is rapidly becoming an essential indicator of development potential. For societies poor in natural resources, investment in human capacity serves as a means of entering and competing in the international arena, but knowledge capital is limited by the extent to which its owners can reach and manipulate computers, the Internet, and other electronic media.⁷ For countries building knowledge economies, education becomes the key means of providing this access equitably to all members of society. The wealthy may be able to provide for themselves in this arena, but the majority of Middle Eastern populations cannot afford the initial and follow-up costs of computing and other information technology at the household level (UNDP, 2003, pp. 63–64; Burkhart and Older, 2003). Failure to embed new technology within the educational system and to routinize and facilitate its use by students and teachers risks pushing most students to the wrong side of the “information divide” and has negative long-term implications for regional and international competitiveness.

Gender Equity

The importance of the education of girls and women to development is well documented.⁸ Investments in female education substantially benefit individuals, families, and societies, and such benefits include economic, political, and social components. Indeed, while the economic benefits of educating girls are the most commonly cited, effects in other arenas are at least as profound and bear particular relevance in societies like Palestine where the participation of women in the labor force is limited and a source of internal debate.

At the individual level, education not only provides access to employment opportunities, but provides girls with “an expanded sense of [their] own potential, increasing [their] self confidence, [their] social and negotiation skills . . . and [their] ability to protect [themselves] against violence and ill health” (Bellamy, 2004, p. 7). The knowledge and life skills that schooling provides are valuable risk reducers in a range of family and social arenas.

At the family level, a mother’s education has lasting effects on the health of her children, on their own levels of education, and on the well-being of her family.⁹ For

⁶ See UNDP (2003) for a thoughtful discussion of these tensions and the importance of maintaining and developing Arabic as a language of instruction.

⁷ See Delors et al. (1996) for exploration of the equity and interdependence issues involved in harnessing the power of “universal communication” for education.

⁸ See, for example, UNICEF (2004), UNESCO (2004b), and World Bank (2001).

⁹ See UNICEF (2002), cited in Bellamy (2004) p. 18.

example, across the developing world, each extra year of maternal education has been estimated to reduce the mortality rate for children under five by 5–10 percent (Herz et al., 1991, p. 19). Educated women have demonstrated a greater propensity for dedicating family finances to investments and expenditures that benefit the health and education of their family and their children, and they have both more knowledge and greater access to resources in these areas. When educated mothers participate in the labor force, these benefits are multiplied by increases in family income.

At the social level, gross domestic product per capita increases as primary enrollment ratios for girls increase, and increasing gender parity in education is linked to lower socioeconomic development costs overall and faster economic growth (World Bank, 2001). Increasing the education of women also provides them with greater opportunities for engagement in politics and administration. The presence of greater numbers of women in formal political and administrative positions has been found to decrease corruption and reduce levels of violence (Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti, 1999).

While these links among girls' education, family, and social well-being have resulted in a greater emphasis on girls' education in international development circles, gender equity in education is not simply a matter of ensuring enrollment parity (which Palestine, significantly, has already largely achieved). The quality of the education that girls and boys receive also has significant effects on their life chances, and too often quality indicators (including curricula and pedagogy) favor boys. Greater attention to what girls are learning and how they are being taught is imperative if equity concerns are to be fully addressed.

It is important to note that education for boys is worthy of attention as well. Gender equity demands high-quality experiences for both boys and girls. There is evidence linking education for boys to a variety of positive outcomes beyond improved employment opportunities. In the West Bank and Gaza, for example, enrollment rates of children and youth are more than 10 percentage points higher when the father has at least secondary-level education (Jacobsen, 2003, p. 98). Unfortunately, when education for boys is discussed, the current debate tends to focus on whether there is a relationship between education and the propensity to radicalization and violence. Like girls, boys deserve more thoughtful analyses of ways in which what and how they are learning can contribute to their own and their societies' well-being.

In sum, we suggest that the excellence of an educational system can be assessed in three areas: access, quality, and delivery. However, system characteristics in each of these areas affect those in the others, and their interplay can either strengthen or weaken the system as a whole. Crosscutting issues of a system's local relevance, the extent to which it is globally competitive, and the ways in which issues of gender are addressed should also be considered when assessing system quality or contemplating reform. In what follows, we use this framework to appraise the challenges and the potential of the present Palestinian system and to offer recommendations that reflect targets of excellence that

can support the new state's ambitions for becoming an important and independent part of the region's political economy.

Historical Development of Palestinian Education (1517–2004)

Any proposals for the development of Palestinian education must take into consideration the system's unique history and the resulting competencies and deficiencies in access, quality, and delivery to which it has been subject. When viewed in terms of the framework we have provided above, Palestinian education has consistently exhibited three features:

- Steady expansion of *access*, both horizontally (in terms of class, gender, and the urban-rural divide) and vertically (in terms of increasing access to higher levels of education along these same dimensions).
- Struggles to achieve and maintain *quality* while expanding access.
- Inconsistent *delivery*, due primarily to constraints on administration and funding.

In this section, we trace these trends from the Ottoman administration of Palestine to the present, with particular attention to the significant effects on Palestinian education of external forces. We note that these effects have both supported and inhibited the growth of the system, and that they are likely to linger well into the early years of a Palestinian state. The high value Palestinians place on education and their efforts to maintain educational progress in the face of political and economic upheavals have given the system durability, but also a certain amount of detachment from other development challenges. The willingness of outside agencies and donors to support and develop Palestinian education has also had a dual effect. It has sustained the system and provided a degree of linkage to international standards, but it also has reduced its autonomy. Building on the system's durability and maximizing the positive effects of its international connections, while supporting autonomy and local relevance, will thus be a core challenge for the emerging Palestinian state.

Education Under the Ottomans (1517–1917)

Formal, “modern” education in Palestine began to take shape during the Ottoman era. In this period, access was limited, quality was uneven, and delivery was split across a variety of institutions. The majority of schools were the traditional village *kuttab*,¹⁰ which

¹⁰ A *kuttab* is a traditional school with a strong religious focus that also teaches basic literacy and numeracy. The instructor is usually a local religious figure. Girls may be taught with boys or taught separately by the instructor's wife. Although still common in many parts of the Middle East, the *kuttab* is not a feature of the current educational system in Palestine (a preschool operated by a mosque or an Islamic social service organization is not technically a *kuttab*).

taught minimal literacy and provided an introduction to the Qur'an and religious practice for both boys and girls (although female enrollment was limited). However, a small number of government schools were also established, to train future bureaucrats or to offer Islamic religious instruction in a controlled environment. During the second half of the 19th century, private schools were increasingly opened as outreach arms of Christian missionary organizations or under indigenous sponsorship; these schools included the first institutions established especially for the education of girls. Government schools used Turkish as the language of instruction, while *kuttab* and private schools used Arabic, with the sponsoring country's language (e.g., English, German, or French) as the secondary language in missionary institutions. In none of the schools of this period was education developed specifically for Palestinian students, nor was it designed to serve as the foundation for a uniquely Palestinian state. Ottoman education prepared Ottoman citizens, private schools guided indigenous elites toward a Euro-American modernism, and the *kuttab* provided a basic literacy and religious training for a broader Muslim identity rather than for Palestinian nationalism.

The British Mandate (1917–1948)

Ottoman administration of Palestine was followed by the British Mandate. Access improved and delivery was streamlined as the total number of schools grew under British administration, but quality varied significantly across institutions. Village schools were largely folded into the state school system, and secular education became increasingly dominant. Attempts were made to declare education to be compulsory and to expand the participation of girls, although neither effort was very successful. Private schools remained the choice and largely the territory of the elite.

Developments in this period essentially set the framework for the next 50 years of Palestinian education. Expanded access, secularism, and bureaucratization were accompanied by strong external influence on the system and a general disconnection from the needs and concerns of ordinary Palestinians. By 1948, the system was

increasingly designed to serve the entire population but starved of the resources to meet that mission; administration was highly centralized; control of the system was politically sensitive, chiefly on nationalist grounds; the curriculum was largely imported and ignored Palestinian national identity; and the public system was supplemented by an extensive private system. (Brown, 2003, p. 146)

1948–1967

Access to education continued to expand in the years between the end of the British Mandate and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. However, delivery of educational services was significantly complicated during this period, often with negative effects on quality. Two important structural and institutional changes occurred, with lasting effects on the system.

Egyptian and Jordanian Administration. The 1948 war resulted in Jordanian administration of the West Bank and Egyptian administration of Gaza. These governments implemented their own curricula, textbooks, teacher certification procedures, and administrative regulations in the areas that fell under their control. The Palestinian education system thus developed a two-tiered structure, with next to no coordination between the agencies serving Palestinians under the two administrations.

Establishment of UNRWA. A third educational delivery institution also emerged, with the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in 1949. Founded to meet the needs of Palestinians displaced in the 1948 war, UNRWA continues to serve those individuals and their descendants today. Along with other social services, the agency provides schooling through grade 10, teacher training, vocational training, and college scholarships for refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as for those in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. UNRWA is also a significant employer and has served as one key point of connection between the international community and Palestinian educators and students. While the agency has historically coordinated its service provision with the governing powers in the territories in which it operates, it has had access to additional resources and opportunities as a result of its international sponsorship, which has provided additional support for quality.

1967–1987

The 1967 war resulted in the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel and further complicated delivery of Palestinian education. While the Israelis retained the Jordanian and Egyptian educational systems in their general form, the military and later civil administrations assumed direct oversight of system components thought essential to maintaining stability within the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli authorities reviewed texts and curricular materials for use in Palestinian government schools; oversaw the hiring of educators, system staff, and administrators; licensed private schools; and issued permits for new school construction and existing expansion (Brown, 2003; Rigby, 1995). The Israeli administration also managed the educational budget for government schools in the territories (UNRWA school budgets continued to be derived from international contributions to the agency).

The education system continued to expand quantitatively during this period, with particularly notable growth in the availability of tertiary education. University education was no longer limited to the elite; increasing numbers of low-income students, rural students, and those from refugee camps also gained access to tertiary schooling (Baramki, 1987; Paz, 2000). These university-educated Palestinians contributed to the development of an active civil society during this period, as the number of student groups, research centers, the media, youth organizations, and similar institutions expanded rapidly.

The expansion of access, however, was not paralleled by a proportional increase in funding, and quality concerns deepened (UNESCO, 1995). As the population grew, demand outpaced supply, and the system became significantly under-resourced. Schools began to operate on multiple shifts, equipment and educational resources were scarce, and teachers and administrators were often unqualified or underqualified. Curricula were not updated to parallel revisions in Egypt and Jordan, with the result that Palestinian educational content did not keep pace even with that of its closest neighbors. Government schools were reputed to provide the lowest quality education, although they served the largest number of students. UNRWA schools, second largest in terms of overall enrollment, were able to access the agency's fiscal and human resources to help support their services, and the far smaller network of private elementary and secondary institutions was able to leverage international connections to support some innovation and quality improvement (Rigby, 1995). In general, however, an inverse relationship between access and quality developed during this period, and resolving this dilemma will be one of the system's most difficult future challenges.

The First Intifada (1987–1993)

The military, security, and political ramifications of the 1987–1993 intifada further eroded the Palestinian education system's capacity to deliver quality services. However, this period was also notable for a degree of innovation and flexibility in curriculum and pedagogy that provided a base for independent development after autonomy in 1993 (Graham-Brown, 1984).

Palestinian schools became active centers of political resistance¹¹ during the intifada—a function that led to significant disruption of education. From 1987 to 1991, it was not uncommon for schools to miss as much as half of their instructional time because of closures and strikes (Al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man, 1988; Rigby, 1995, p. 15). Palestinian universities were closed by Israeli administrative order from 1988 to 1990, gradually reopening from May 1990 to October 1991 (Essoulami, 1992; B'Tselem, 1990).

The infrastructure and resource problems of the system were exacerbated by the political conflict. As the formal system declined, however, communities organized emergency alternatives to fill the gaps created by these outages in services, and an active and dynamic network of nongovernmental and alternative providers of educational services, training, and innovations began to develop (Mahshi and Bush, 1989; Fahsheh, 1993). Questions about the appropriate nature of and control over Palestinian education were central to the conflict, and debates around these issues during

¹¹ Schools observed national strikes in protest of the occupation and served as rallying points for demonstrations, while teachers and students engaged in unsanctioned study of curricular elements prohibited by formal policy (including Palestinian history and geography). Universities provided a base for student political activism and loci of interaction with the international community around issues related to the occupation. See, for example, Baramki, 1987; Mahshi and Bush, 1989; and Fahsheh, 1993.

the intifada set the stage for much of the Palestinian planning in the early autonomy period (Rigby, 1989).

Early Autonomy (1994–1999)

The education system serving Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (with the exception of schools in East Jerusalem) was transferred from Israeli control to that of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994, as a condition of implementation of the Oslo Accords. Between 1994 and 1999, a number of important steps were taken toward system rehabilitation.

Improvement of service delivery was the primary focus of development efforts. The disjointed structures of the Egyptian- and Jordanian-based systems in Gaza and the West Bank were streamlined and combined, and a new Palestinian matriculation examination was designed and implemented. An Education Management Information System was also developed for MoE use.

An independent Curriculum Development Center was established, with responsibility for curriculum design, production, and implementation later transferred to a curricular unit in the MoE. Curricula and texts were borrowed from the national curricula of Jordan and to some extent Egypt while a Palestinian national curriculum was being developed.¹² Phase-in of the new national curriculum and ongoing review and development began in 1996.

Short- and long-term plans for the development of the system were formulated, and attention was paid to the need to build both long-term and short-term institutional capacity. Relationships with donors and other external bodies were cultivated and expanded, and accountability was acknowledged as a system priority. In general, the MoE was perceived by international partners and by the local population to function well and to operate, to the best of its ability, with reasonable transparency and expertise (Birzeit University, 2003; Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 2001; World Bank, 1999b and c).¹³

Planning, however, was stymied by fiscal realities, and access and quality remained significant problems for the system. Rapid population expansion as a result of immigration following autonomy—the student population increased from 650,000 to 1 million between 1994 and 2001 [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 2001b and 2004a]—led to crowded schools and forced the ministry to focus on facilities and infrastructure at the expense of quality improvement. Donor commitments notwithstanding, the necessary funds for the construction of additional government

¹² These materials were issued with PA-authorized covers but were not products of the PA's curriculum unit. International concerns about anti-Israeli and/or anti-Jewish content in these materials appear to be being gradually addressed as the PA develops and implements its own curricula, as we discuss later in this chapter.

¹³ These observations are intended as relative; lack of qualifications among decisionmaking staff, reported nepotism, and questionable appropriations of funds have been matters of concern across all Palestinian ministries.

schools and the improvement of existing ones were not fully forthcoming, and the schools remained overcrowded and under-equipped.

Nongovernmental schools continued to play a key role in Palestinian education, with varied relationships to the state system. UNRWA continued to operate schools through grade 10 for refugee students in the West Bank and Gaza, adopting the Ministry of Education's new curriculum and scheduling. Interface between the UNRWA system and the Ministry of Education, however, was not seamless, and planning for the eventual absorption of UNRWA services into the government framework under a final settlement was only sporadic. Private schools increased in number with the return of expatriate Palestinians and international interest in supporting innovation in Palestinian education, although their planning and development was subject to MoE approval and licensing. Opportunities for preschool education, almost entirely nongovernmental, also increased, although only 29 percent of the age group of four- to five-year-olds was utilizing these services in 2003–2004 (Palestinian MoE, 2004c, p. 7).

Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000–2004)

The ongoing intifada has significantly eroded the progress of the 1994–1999 period, undermining even the system's most notable and durable achievements in access, quality, and delivery.¹⁴ These issues are discussed briefly below and in greater detail in the section of this chapter on "Strengths and Challenges Regarding Future Development."

Access to education has been limited by damage to the educational infrastructure across all levels of the system, by the seizure of property by Israeli forces, and by restrictions on the movement of students, teachers, and administrators. The Ministry of Education reports that 295 schools, 11 higher education institutions, and seven MoE administrative complexes have been shelled or damaged since 2000, with consequences including structural damage from shelling and bulldozing and damage to or destruction of furniture, computers, teaching materials, and administrative records. Forty-eight schools have been turned, temporarily or permanently, into Israeli military bases or detention centers, while ten schools and two universities have been closed by Israeli military order (Palestinian MoE, 2004b and 2004c).

Quality has eroded in the absence of consistent access and reliable funding streams and the presence of an overwhelming atmosphere of violence and fear. Student achievement has slipped notably, particularly for students in high-conflict locations, and the need for both academic and psychosocial support services is high (Palestinian MoE, 2004c; Save the Children, 2001; UNRWA, 2003a). UNRWA schools, for example, now offer programs of compensatory education in Arabic, English, and math

¹⁴ Although much debated in the public realm, "responsibility" for the conditions we describe in this section is irrelevant for the purposes of this exercise. Planning for the development of any emergent Palestinian state's education system requires an acknowledgment that this system faces notable material and sociopsychological deficits resulting from the events and climate of the 2000–2004 period.

for students suffering from anxiety, phobia, withdrawal, depression, sleep disturbance, and diminished concentration. UNRWA has provided these services to approximately 120,000 of its 250,000 students over the past three years (Nasser, 2004), but demand has been greater than the agency's capacity to provide assistance.

Delivery of education has been hampered by constraints on the movement of people and goods and by the uncertainty of the policy environment. Attempts at better integrating the split systems of the West Bank and Gaza and planning for the integration of the Ministry of Education and UNRWA systems have been interrupted, resulting in the continuing cost burden of maintaining duplicate, parallel administrations. Similarly, efforts to build infrastructure across the system and upgrade facilities have been slowed or in some cases halted. Most important, long-term planning has been set aside in favor of crisis response, and the ambitious efforts of 1994–1999 to coordinate system restructuring and reform have come largely to a halt.

The system deficits resulting from these broad contextual factors are exacerbated by the ongoing construction of the separation wall in the West Bank. Costs to the Ministry of Education and to Palestinian families are both direct (in terms of the need to establish new schools and hire new teachers in areas cut off from established services) and indirect (in terms of forced relocation, absence, increased dropout rates, and increased travel by students and teachers needing to pass through or around the wall to attend their schools or institutions of tertiary education). As of October 2003, 22 localities had been separated from their schools by the wall (PCBS, 2003a), and its completion will isolate many more.

The PA requested \$31 million in emergency humanitarian aid to education (\$21 million for primary and secondary education and \$10 million for tertiary education) in 2003–2004, a significant addition to the roughly \$52 million in long-term development aid it was already administering (PA, 2003, pp. 16 and 17). In July 2002, UNRWA requested an additional \$56 million for physical repairs and for interim programs for children unable to reach their schools, such as kits for emergency homeschooling (UN, 2002). Additional UNRWA emergency appeals [for an additional \$9.4 million in aid for remedial and vocational education, extracurricular programs for school children and youth, and psychosocial counseling in 2003 (Nasser, 2004; UNRWA, 2003b and 2003c), and \$5.9 million in 2004 (UNRWA, 2004)] have been necessary to continue to provide support and basic services as conditions in Gaza, in particular, worsen.¹⁵

¹⁵ As of September 30, 2004, UNRWA's emergency appeals (including those for education) for 2004 remained underfunded by slightly over \$119 million, and emergency education activities had been scaled back as a result (Nasser, 2004).

The Palestinian Educational System Today

Planning Palestinian educational development through the first ten years of statehood requires an analysis of the current system's strengths and weaknesses, and the implications of their configuration for short- to medium-term system outcomes, as we will discuss. First, however, we provide more detail on the current characteristics of the system to explain its classification in the target areas. Data in this section reflect 2003–2004 conditions where possible and appropriate. Where 2003–2004 data are not available, numbers typically refer to 1998–1999, the last fiscal year of relative system stability prior to the crisis conditions of the current intifada.

Structure

The Palestinian education system currently includes ten years of basic schooling (four years of lower elementary school and six years of upper elementary school) and two years of secondary schooling.¹⁶ Secondary schooling is either academic (with students tracked into arts or science, depending on academic performance and the recommendation of teachers¹⁷) or vocational (in commercial, agricultural, industrial, religious law, or tourism tracks, with options that allow for continuing to tertiary education or terminating studies after grade 12). For those who hope to continue to tertiary education, secondary schooling concludes with the *tawjihi* examination, the results of which largely determine students' access to the postsecondary institutions and fields of their choice. The minimum *tawjihi* score needed for tertiary education admission varies annually, and departments within tertiary institutions set their own internal standards, with sciences typically requiring higher scores than nonscience departments, and universities requiring higher scores than community colleges.

Indigenous tertiary education options for Palestinians currently include eleven universities and five colleges. Three universities are in Gaza, and the remaining eight universities and five colleges are in the West Bank. Universities and colleges offer four-year baccalaureate degrees and, at seven institutions, graduate programs. There are also twenty community colleges in the West Bank and five in Gaza. These institutions offer higher technical and vocational training that lasts for two years and leads to various diplomas. Finally, Al-Quds Open University maintains fifteen regional centers in the West Bank and five in Gaza, and awards undergraduate degrees through distance learning.

Palestinian schools include both single-sex and coeducational institutions (there were 674 of the latter in 2003–2004—about 23 percent of the total number of schools) (Palestinian MoE, 2004a). Coeducational schools are more common at the elementary level (social preference is for separated schooling at the secondary level) and in the elite

¹⁶ UNRWA schools provide only academic basic and limited vocational secondary options. UNRWA students who wish to enroll in academic secondary school must transfer to government or private schools in 11th grade.

¹⁷ Tracking streams were eliminated in the first curriculum revision in 1996, but reintroduced in 2003–2004.

private sector. Universities may be coeducational or offer a range of single-sex options for students (e.g., classes are held on certain days of the week for males and others for females).

Scope and Enrollment

As of 2004, there were 2,956 basic and secondary schools and kindergartens in the West Bank and Gaza (2,254 in the West Bank; 702 in Gaza) (PCBS, 2004a). Of these, 1,580 basic and secondary schools and two kindergartens were run by the Ministry of Education, and 272 basic schools were run by UNRWA. An additional 845 kindergartens and 257 schools were privately run. School facilities served 1,017,443 pupils (West Bank: 601,941, Gaza: 415,502), with about 69 percent in government schools, 25 percent in UNRWA schools, and 6 percent in private schools. A total of 70,225 students were enrolled in kindergarten over that period (about 29 percent of the age-eligible population) (PCBS, 2004a).

Gross enrollment in basic education is near-universal, and the average persistence to grade five was at 99 percent in 2001 [United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2001; PCBS, 2001a]; the net enrollment rate (representing children enrolled in age-appropriate schooling—number of enrolled same-age children divided by all school-age children, and excluding those children who are not the appropriate age for their grade) was 93.7 percent for that same period (Palestinian MoE, 2004c, p. 10). These numbers are high for the region and for developing countries overall, and they are roughly equal to rates in developed countries.¹⁸ Secondary education enrollment is also high, with gross rates of 80 percent for males and 86 percent for females in 2000 (UNICEF, 2000). Again, this rate is much higher than the regional average and approaches the 90 percent average of the developed world. Overall, roughly one-third of the total West Bank and Gaza population is presently in basic or secondary school [UNESCO, undated(a)]—a figure that is expected to increase over the next 20 years and that is characteristic of the very youthful population of Palestine.

As enrollment figures (see Table 8.1) demonstrate, the school system has achieved near-parity by gender; in fact, more girls than boys are enrolled in secondary schooling. This higher female enrollment is increasingly characteristic of the Middle East, where many male youth choose work over secondary schooling. Nonetheless, boys are much more likely to attend private schools (among which are numbered the “best” of the Palestinian educational institutions [Brown, 2003; Palestinian MoE, 2000]) than are girls. Indeed, while the high enrollments of girls are a system strength, questions remain about what kind of schooling they have access to, and the quality of education that they receive, as we discuss below.

A total of 98,439 students were studying in universities and colleges during 2003–2004, and 5,892 were at community colleges during that period (PCBS, 2004c). There

¹⁸ For this and all other comparative data, comparison sources are UNDP, 2003; UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2004; and World Bank, 2004.

Table 8.1
Number of Students in Basic and Secondary Schools by Region, Supervising Authority, Stage, and Gender, 2003-2004

Region	Supervising Authority	Grand Total			Basic			Secondary		
		Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Palestinian Territory	Total	1,017,443	512,490	504,953	916,837	463,806	453,031	100,606	48,684	51,922
	Government	706,187	352,350	353,837	609,604	306,079	303,525	96,583	46,271	50,312
	UNRWA	251,584	124,313	127,271	251,584	124,313	127,271	NA	NA	NA
West Bank	Private	59,672	35,827	23,845	55,649	33,414	22,235	4,023	2,413	1,610
	Total	601,941	302,736	299,205	542,520	274,331	268,189	59,421	28,405	31,016
	Government	489,621	245,858	243,763	433,989	219,707	214,282	55,632	26,151	29,481
Gaza	UNRWA	59,909	25,920	33,989	59,909	25,920	33,989	NA	NA	NA
	Private	52,411	30,958	21,453	48,622	28,704	19,918	3,789	2,254	1,535
	Total	415,502	209,754	205,748	374,317	189,475	184,842	41,185	20,279	20,906
	Government	216,566	106,492	110,074	175,615	86,372	89,243	40,951	20,120	20,831
	UNRWA	191,675	98,393	93,282	191,675	98,393	93,282	NA	NA	NA
	Private	7,261	4,869	2,392	7,027	4,710	2,317	234	159	75

SOURCE: PCBS, 2004b.

is near gender parity in enrollment at this level as well, for both types of postsecondary education.

Governance

The Ministry of Education¹⁹ is responsible for primary oversight of Palestinian government and private schools. Although the intent is a unified system, administration is conducted from duplicate centers in Ramallah (for the West Bank) and Gaza City (for Gaza), because of constraints on the movement of staff and resources in the current political context. Seventeen regional directorates oversee the delivery of government and private educational services. The MoE also provides curricula and examinations for schools administered by UNRWA, but it is not responsible for financing or management of those schools. UNRWA schools operate with the same framework of courses, grades, and semesters as the government schools, but the agency hires, trains, and pays its own staff and is accountable to the United Nations, not to the PA.

The MoE also collaborates with other government agencies in the development and administration of education and training programs for school-age and out-of-school populations. These bodies include the Ministry of Social Affairs; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Labor; the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture; and the General Personnel Council.

Policy mandates parent councils at each MoE school (not in the UNRWA or private institutions), but the role of these bodies is unclear, and there is no evidence that they have in fact been constituted across the system.

Preschool and Special Services

Preschool services are provided by private day-care centers (which are licensed and overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs) and by kindergartens that are licensed but not typically funded by the Ministry of Education. These facilities tend to be clustered in and around urban centers and to be patronized by the children of financially better-off families.

Special education services are provided by both the Ministry of Education and UNRWA for their respective student populations. There are no available data on the exact number of Palestinian students with special education needs, but it is probable that the majority of those with such needs are not being served. In East Jerusalem, for example, only 400 out of 20,000 school-age Palestinian children were identified as needing special services (Gumpel and Awartani, 2003), an exceptionally low figure that is probably linked to lack of capacity for diagnosis. (The majority of students served are those with readily apparent physical disabilities.)

Counseling and psychological services are also provided in both MoE and UNRWA schools, although the scope and content vary. All UNRWA schools are

¹⁹ The Ministry of Higher Education was formally separated from the Ministry of Education in 1996 and then reabsorbed into the MoE in 2003.

served by the agency's emergency trauma support program, and many receive additional support through targeted programs of psychological intervention.²⁰ MoE schools are served by a small, experimental cadre of school counselors, funded by external contributions.

Grade Repetition and Dropout Rates

Grade repetition rates in 2002–2003 were 1.4 percent for the basic and 1.3 percent for the secondary stages of school, with boys averaging higher rates than girls in both stages (1.5 percent versus 1.2 percent and 1.4 percent versus 1.1 percent, respectively). These rates are low compared with others in the region and with those of developing countries as a group. Palestinian dropout rates are also low through the basic grades, but rise to 3.7 percent overall at the secondary level. At the primary level, dropout rates are a bit higher for boys, with an average of 0.9 percent versus 0.6 percent for girls; at the secondary level, however, dropout rates are lower for boys (2.6 percent) than for girls (4.8 percent)²¹ (PCBS, 2003c).

Classroom Context

Demographic pressure on the Palestinian education system is high (see Chapter Four for details on population growth and projections). In the absence of sufficient funding for system expansion, student-to-teacher ratios and classroom density ratios have continually increased, although both are higher in UNRWA schools than in government schools. During the 2002–2003 school year, student-teacher ratios averaged 35.9 to 1 in UNRWA schools, 27.2 to 1 in government schools, and 16.6 to 1 in private schools (PCBS, 2004c).²²

Classroom density ranges from a high of 43.4 students per classroom in UNRWA schools, to 34.7 in government schools, to a relative low of 24.4 in private schools (PCBS, 2004a). Faced with high demand and limited supply, UNRWA schools have also taken the additional step of moving to multiple shifts (see Table 8.2). In partial double shifts, some of the classrooms operate on a double shift while the majority of the other classrooms operate on a single shift. In full double shifts (one in the morning and one in the afternoon), all or most of these classrooms operate on a double shift under the administration of one headmaster or headmistress, or two different schools use the same school premises.

Eighty government schools (11.4 percent of the total) were also operating on double shifts in 2003–2004 (Palestinian MoE, 2004c, p. 15).

²⁰ It should be noted that funding for these programs is always in jeopardy because of the agency's financial shortfalls.

²¹ We discuss factors influencing this pattern of female dropout later in this chapter.

²² The student/teacher ratio does not include kindergarten.

Table 8.2
UNRWA Schools by Number of Shifts Operated, 1998–1999

	West Bank	Gaza
Elementary (grades 1–7)		
Single shift	12	15
Partial double shift	3	1
Full double shift	14	105
Preparatory (grades 8–10)		
Single shift	51	29
Partial double shift	6	1
Full double shift	12	17
Total		
Single shift	63	44
Partial double shift	9	2
Full double shift	26	122

SOURCE: UNRWA (2004b).

NOTES: The number of schools on a partial or full double shift have increased since 1999, but current figures are not publicly available. Although newly standardized education system descriptions do not include a separate “preparatory” (formerly grades 7–10) cycle, UNRWA cycle descriptions tend to continue to reflect past practice (as well as the current allocation of students to buildings by grade).

Teacher Characteristics

Palestinian students at all levels may be taught by either men or women, although female teachers are found in boys’ secondary classrooms only in private schools, and kindergarten teachers are almost exclusively female. There is an overall cultural and policy preference for matching the gender of staff to that of students at the secondary level, and the presence of male teachers in girls’ classrooms is primarily a function of the imbalance of qualified male-to-female staff ratios at that level, not a preferred policy choice.

Data from 1997 on staff distribution (see Table 8.3) illustrate the difference by gender as the educational level increases. This pattern does not appear to have reversed in the 1997–2004 period, although exactly comparable data are not publicly available. Gender imbalance remains particularly noticeable among tertiary education staff, with 2,959 males and 425 females out of a total of 3,384 university instructors in 2002–2003 (PCBS, 2004a and 2004c).

Teacher levels of degree achievement also vary notably by gender and degree level, as reflected in Table 8.4.²³

²³ These configurations of staff may have implications for quality, particularly the quality of education received by girls, as we discuss below.